



U.S. AIR FORCE

This Week in USAF and PACAF History 28 September – 4 October 2009



29 September 1918 **MEDAL OF HONOR.** Frank Luke was a copper miner and bare-knuckle boxer before enlisting in the Army during World War I. After flight training, he was assigned to the 27th Aero Squadron with a specific mission to destroy observation balloons. Luke earned the nickname of “the Arizona balloon buster” after destroying 14 enemy balloons and airplanes in 17 days of combat. On 29 September, Luke fought through eight enemy fighter escorts to shoot down three more balloons. Severely wounded, Luke dropped close to the ground and fired on German ground forces before crash landing. Once on the ground, Luke drew a pistol and re-engaged the enemy soldiers until he died. At the time of his death, Frank Luke was 21 years old and the leading ace among U.S. pilots. He received the Medal of Honor posthumously.



"Man, how that kid could fly! No one, mind you, no one, had the sheer contemptuous courage that boy possessed. I know he's been criticized for being such a lone-hander, but, good Lord, he won us priceless victories by those very tactics. He was an excellent pilot and probably the best flying marksman on the Western Front. We had any number of expert pilots and there was no shortage of good shots, but the perfect combination, like the perfect specimen of anything in the world, was scarce. Frank Luke was the perfect combination."

- Harold Hartney, Commanding Officer, 1st Pursuit Group

"He was the most daring aviator and greatest fighter pilot of the entire war. His life is one of the brightest glories of our Air Service. He went on a rampage and shot down fourteen enemy aircraft, including ten balloons, in eight days. No other ace - Britain's Bishop from Canada, France's Fonck or even the dreaded Richthofen - had ever come close to that."

- Eddie Rickenbacker



2 October 1918 The **first successful unmanned air vehicle/ cruise missile** was flight-tested at Dayton, Ohio. The Army had asked inventor Charles Kettering of Dayton to develop the weapon, and Orville Wright was a consultant on the project. The Kettering Aerial Torpedo, or “Kettering Bug,” was a small bi-plane with a 180-pound bomb, launched from a dolly running on a portable track. The Kettering Bug made several successful test flights, but World War I ended before the weapon could be employed in combat.



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29 September 1938 Maj. Gen. Henry H. Arnold became **chief of the Army Air Corps**, replacing Maj. Gen. Oscar Westover, who died in an airplane crash on September 21st.

30 September 1940 Contractors completed work on **Hickam's "Big Barracks,"** also known as the "Hickam Hotel" and the "**Hale Makai.**" The building was the world's largest single military barracks at that time. Now home to Headquarters PACAF, the three-story reinforced concrete structure could house 3,200 enlisted personnel. Its central kitchen could feed all the troops by shifts in the centrally-located mess hall.

4-6 October 1946 Col Clarence S. Irvine and his crew flew the B-29 "Pacusan Dreamboat" to a **nonstop, unrefueled distance record** of 9,500 miles by flying from Honolulu to Cairo, Egypt, in 39 hours 36 minutes. The flight path took the aircraft over Arctic regions to test the crew through hazardous weather and with complicated navigation and communication problems.

1 October 1952 **Operation FOX PETER TWO.** Through 14 October, a flight of 75 F-84Gs flew across the Pacific through the use of extended air refueling. The first refueling occurred between California and Hawaii, and the second between Midway Island and Japan. These operations proved that fighters could be moved to the PACAF AOR quickly by air.

1 October 1957 General Thomas S. Power, the CINCSAC, decided to begin **ground alert** operations to counter the Soviet ICBM threat. SAC maintained approximately one-third of its aircraft with weapons loaded and crews prepared for immediate takeoff. It was also under Power's command that SAC adopted the slogan "*Peace Is Our Profession.*"

4-5 October 1980 The Dutch cruise ship **M.S. Prinsendam** with 519 passengers and crew aboard caught fire in the Gulf of Alaska, forcing all to abandon ship. Elmendorf's 71st Aerospace RR Squadron sent an HH-3 helicopter and an HC-130 to the disaster site. Piloting the HH-3, Capt. John J. Walters, USAF, and his crew rescued 61 passengers and crewmen, hoisting and airlifting them from lifeboats to a supertanker. For this rescue, Captain Walters earned the **Mackay Trophy**. The abandoned *Prinsendam* sank on 11 October.



2 October 1981 **"Rearming America."** Reversing some decisions made by President Carter, President Reagan announced that the USAF would build and deploy 100 B-1 bombers. (On 1 October 86, the B-1 achieved initial operating capability at Dyess AFB, Texas.) President Reagan also cancelled the horizontal multiple shelter basing scheme for the M-X inter-continental ballistic missile in favor of super-hard silos, and announced programs to continue the ALCM program and to develop an advanced stealth bomber.



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1 October 1986 The **Goldwater-Nichols Act** removed the service chiefs from the operational chain of command, which subsequently ran from the President and Secretary of Defense directly to unified combatant commanders. This legislation was based partly on lessons learned from operations in Vietnam, Grenada and the attempted rescue of U.S. hostages in Iran.



3-14 October 1993 **AIR FORCE CROSS.** An Army MH-60 Black Hawk helicopter was shot down during a battle in Mogadishu, Somalia. Despite his own injuries, Para-rescueman TSgt Timothy Wilkinson, USAF (at left) ran through enemy fire repeatedly to carry out five wounded Army Rangers. Even when shrapnel tore a chunk of skin off his face, Wilkinson did not falter. For his heroism, he earned the Air Force Cross.

Operation RESTORE HOPE II. Over the next nine days, C-5 Galaxy and C-141 Starlifter aircraft transported 1,300 troops, 18 M-1 Abrams tanks, and 44 Bradley infantry fighting vehicles from the United States to protect U.S. forces who had come under heavy attack during the United Nations food distribution effort in Somalia. Tankers flew 169 refueling missions to offload 13.4 million pounds of fuel to support the airlift.

1 October 1999 The USAF deployed Aerospace Expeditionary Force (AEF) 1 to Southwest Asia. It was the **first AEF to deploy** under a new rotational system for 10 AEFs. The new system allowed the Air Force to respond more effectively with ready forces for operations overseas and increased morale by making deployments more predictable.

29 September 2001 The **U.S. launched satellites from Alaska** for the first time, using the Kodiak Launch Complex. Previous U.S. space launches were only from Florida or California.

2 October 2006 ACC declared an initial operating capability for the GBU-39B **Small Diameter Bomb**, a low cost and low collateral damage 250-pound precision strike weapon for use by fighters, bombers and UAVs. Three days later, the 494th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron used the GBU-39/B in combat for the first time. A two-ship F-15E Strike Eagle formation carried the new weapon on a close-air support mission in Iraq.

4 October 2006 USAF officials announced **proposed locations for the F-35A Lightning II**: Eglin AFB for maintenance and flight training; Nellis and Edwards AFBs for flight-testing; and Hill AFB, Kadena AB, Shaw AFB and McEntire ANGB, S. C., for operational squadrons.

